

QUALITY, COST-EFFECTIVE CITY SERVICES
PLANNING AHEAD CREATES A MORE SUSTAINABLE BLOOMINGTON

By Mayor Gene Winstead

Bloomington, like all communities, has evolved since its inception, continually redeveloping and renewing itself.

In the City’s strategic plan, *Imagine Bloomington 2025*, the City Council used residents’ comments and input to create a vision for Bloomington’s future.

This vision was adopted after merging the key components of Bloomington’s traditions of success – residents, neighborhoods, businesses and government – with the unifying theme of sustainability. The City strives to become a more sustainable community, not only environmentally, but economically and socially, with the City organization being the primary catalyst to provide leadership in four key areas: renewal, infrastructure, services and community building.

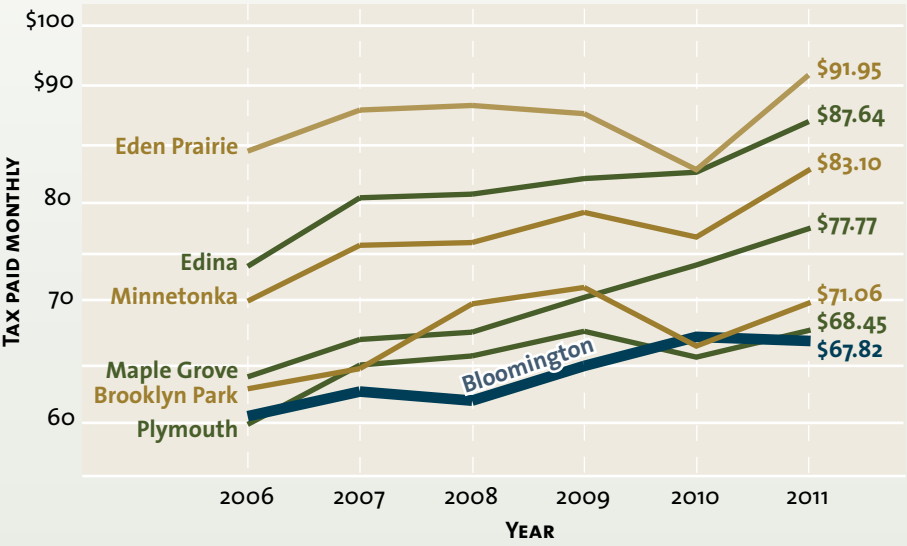
These four key focus areas led to five Council-approved, strategic goals. They include:

- Encouraging sustainable land use.
- Supporting transportation improvements.
- Guiding higher-density, mixed-use, transit-oriented development where appropriate.
- Effectively and efficiently engaging resources and continually improving service quality.
- Maintaining a sustainable organization.

Key to the continuing vitality of our community is the quality and consistency of the services the City provides over the long term.

The City’s current mix of essential and quality-of-life services is based on the decisions of City Councils, past and present. While each and every service

CITY PROPERTY TAX ON MEDIAN VALUE SINGLE-FAMILY HOME
Not adjusted for Aids and Fiscal Disparities



The property tax and utility services that Bloomington provides are among the most competitive of comparable communities in Hennepin County.

may not be used by all individuals in the community, the provision of all services helps support the long-term mission of Bloomington to be a safer and more sustainable community.

For example, perhaps you have never experienced the need to use the Fire Department’s services; a portion of your property tax still goes to support this service in case you or your neighbor need fire service assistance in the future.

In times of economic difficulty, such as the current recession, some correctly ask about the cost-effectiveness of City services. This is a question that the City examines on an ongoing basis in both strong and weak economic times.

Bloomington, a city in a large metro area, is in constant competition with surrounding communities for residents and businesses. One way we can stay competitive is on the cost and quality of the services available. Bloomington’s

cost for City services is among the lowest in Hennepin County. When factoring in property tax aids, including Fiscal Disparities, the cost to serve single-family homes in Bloomington is the lowest – even lower than newer communities that have not undertaken or are just now undertaking the costs for renewing and maintaining their communities. Bloomington was ahead of the game by beginning to maintain and renew its infrastructure in 1992 with the Pavement Management Program.

The property tax and utility services that Bloomington provides are among the most competitive of comparable communities in Hennepin County. See comparison graph above.

However, cost is only part of the equation; the quality of services is the other. While more difficult to compare on a quantitative basis, Bloomington’s service quality routinely compares favorably with those in other communities.

City services are of real value to you – the individual residents and businesses in the community. What is received in value from City services is considered by many in the community to be on par with, or exceeding, the value for the cost of other services such as cable television, cell phone and broadband.

While it is tempting to use short-term methods to reduce the monthly property tax cost, such approaches can have severe consequences in terms of cost effectiveness and productivity over the long term.

In guiding Bloomington to a more sustainable future, the City’s main objectives are to provide the best possible services to the community while reinvesting in our infrastructure and in older areas that are no longer competitive in today’s market. In other words, the most prudent course to take during these difficult economic times is, in fact, to stay the course.

To view the City’s financial information, visit the City’s website.

WEBSITE KEYWORDS: FINANCE.

Volume 18, Number 6

The *Briefing*, published bimonthly by the City of Bloomington, is mailed to our residents and businesses. Direct comments and requests for Braille, larger print or computer disk to Communications Administrator Janine Hill, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington MN 55431-3027; PH 952-563-8819; TTY 952-563-8740; FAX 952-563-8715; E-MAIL jhill@ci.bloomington.mn.us. Website: www.ci.bloomington.mn.us

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The City of Bloomington complies with all applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its services, programs, or activities. Upon request, accommodation will be provided to allow individuals with disabilities to participate in all City of Bloomington services, programs, and activities. The City has designated coordinators to facilitate compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and to coordinate compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations. For more information, contact the Human Services Division, City of Bloomington, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington, MN 55431-3027; 952-563-8733 (Voice); 952-563-8740 (TTY).

Upon request, this information can be available in Braille, large print, audio tape and/or electronic format.

A FEW OF THE CITY’S COMPETITIVELY PRICED SERVICES



City services are cost-competitive with comparable private sector operations. Examples include:

Mowing services – The cost for the City mowing services per acre is half the cost of the competitively bid private contract service.

Street sweeping – The cost to sweep in 2010 was about 86 percent of the 2008 competitively bid private sector contract. (This was the last bid for these services before phasing out the private contract.) Street sweeping is now done exclusively in-house.

Sidewalk snowplowing – In a presentation at the July 12, 2010, Council meeting, available to view on the City’s website, the Public Works Department explained an increase in its level of service and reliability by moving all sidewalk snowplowing in-house and eliminating the private contract service to provide a higher level of service at a better cost.

These are just a few examples of how the City uses resources wisely with more sustainable results.

